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FROM THE EDITOR

The previous issue of *Theatre Survey*, a special edition on "African and Afro-Caribbean Performance," was an occasion for my coeditor (now Associate Editor) Leo Cabranes-Grant and I to announce our shared commitment to internationalization of the journal. In the coming years we hope to extend our geographic coverage to performance cultures of the world that have heretofore received little treatment on *Theatre Survey*'s pages. At the same time, we want to communicate our ongoing commitment to all areas of theatre history, including more familiar terrain. It is therefore especially appropriate that the present issue features an incisive guide to recent trends in medieval studies from Jody Enders. She quotes R. Howard Bloch and Stephen G. Nichols exclaiming in 1996, "There's something exciting going on in medieval studies, and maybe in the Renaissance too. The study of medieval literature and culture has never been more alive or at a more interesting, innovative stage."[1] While Enders expresses some doubt that this proclamation was true in 1996, she gives ample evidence that, in the subsequent decade, the promise of medieval studies has been fulfilled. While it may be true that medievalists were practicing performance studies for decades and they just didn't know it, their engagement has become more self-conscious and deliberate as of late, and Enders exhorts us to reciprocate this interest.

The suggestion by Bloch and Nichols that the efflorescence of medieval studies is spreading to the Renaissance appears to be borne out by Peter Holland's "What Are You Reading?" column, in which he takes us on a guided tour of the book stalls at the annual Shakespeare Association of American conference. We learn, in the words of Lear, "Who loses and who wins, who's in, who's out?" It is exciting to see that the "in" category includes such diverse contributions as the Madagascan film version of *Macbeth*, *Makibefo*, as well as Okwui Enwezor's catalog of the International Centre of Photography exhibition "Archive Fever." Africa, the focus of our last issue, thus makes an unexpected appearance here via Nigeria and Madagascar in a field as traditional as Shakespeare studies. Ours is a transnational moment, indeed!

Transnational connections are likewise evident in Marlis Schweitzer's article "Darn That Merry Widow Hat": The On- and Offstage Life of a Theatrical Commodity, circa 1907–1908," which tracks the remarkable global circulation of theatrical merchandise associated with Franz Lehar's operetta *Die lustige Witwe* (*The Merry Widow*). Premiering in Vienna in 1905, the show soon traveled the world as a franchise with a host of associated commodities. Schweitzer examines "what happens when an object animated within a stage setting leaves the theatre to enter the transnational marketplace—or, in the case of the Merry Widow hat, when a stage object inspires the proliferation of commodities that bear its name and associations, which are then dispersed to various markets

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around world." Particularly notable was the burgeoning circumference of the hat as it circulated in the global marketplace, a feature memorably documented in the images that accompany Schweitzer's text. Her article, which is as witty as it is sophisticated in its scholarship, brings an important feminist lens to bear on the subject of theatrical merchandizing, looking at what the Merry Widow hat can tell us about the agency of female consumers and their spectatorship. Theatrical merchandizing is still a relatively new field, one that is dominated by film scholars. Schweitzer's work brings theatre studies more overtly into the conversation, while at the same time contributing to studies of consumer culture and fashion history.

From a very different geographic region, Magda Romanska's "Between History and Memory: Auschwitz in *Akropolis*, *Akropolis* in Auschwitz" provides a complex excavation of Stanisław Wyspiański's 1904 dramatic poem *Akropolis*, including an analysis of its importance to Polish national culture and centrality to the oeuvre of legendary avant-garde director Jerzy Grotowski. *Akropolis* from its inception was an enigma, a theatrical piece that defied attempts at staging. "This drama as drama cannot be staged," wrote theatre critic Maciej Szybist.[2] Grotowski was among the few Polish directors in the second half of the twentieth century to attempt a production, which he mounted in 1962—making the startling choice to transpose the play's setting to Auschwitz. Despite the fact that Grotowski's film of *Akropolis* has been central to his legacy in American experimental theatre for decades, this production has been long neglected in scholarship. Romanska brings a deep and rich appreciation to both Wyspiański's text and Grotowski's production. She argues that *Akropolis* is not just metatheatrical: "The structure of the performance is that of a Russian *matryoshka* doll—a play within a play within a play within a play—that nonetheless leaves the actors on the outside, beyond any of the structural frames, in a reality untouched by text, context, or historical memory." To this layering, Grotowski added the charged environment of a concentration camp. Romanska provocatively asks, "[W]hy set *Akropolis* in Auschwitz? If Auschwitz, why *Akropolis*? If *Akropolis*, why Auschwitz?" Posing these questions in 2009 is particularly timely, for the Grotowski Institute and UNESCO have declared this the "Year of Grotowski."[3]

As I prepare to send this issue to press, I am struck that it could be called the "Issue of the Image," for we are publishing here an extraordinary range of visual material: many illustrations accompany both Schweitzer's and Romanska's articles, and Mary Tarantino's *Re*:Sources column orients us to a wealth of theatrical design material available at the Wisconsin Historical Society. However, without a doubt, the centerpiece of this issue is Matthew Buckley's "Eloquent Action: The Body and Meaning in Early Commedia dell'Arte," a beautifully composed essay that is accompanied by a reproduction of a series of woodcuts of early commedia dell'arte performance from what is known as the Recueil Fossard, a renowned piece of evidence discovered in the mid-1920s. *Theatre Survey* is proud to be publishing for the first time a full and coherently ordered set of images from the Recueil Fossard, one that will be both widely

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available and suitable for scholarly analysis. (We do so with the financial assistance of Rutgers University, by permission of the National Museum of Fine Arts in Stockholm [Nationalmuseum], and through the generous indulgence of our publishers at Cambridge University Press, who allowed us to exceed our usual space limitations.) Theatre studies has long wrestled with the multidimensional nature of our art form, which operates simultaneously in aural, visual, verbal, and kinesthetic registers. Because of disciplinary biases and the nature of extant evidence, theatre historians of all eras tend to focus disproportionately on textual over pictorial evidence and privilege verbal and literary aspects over the physical and gestural elements. While this is problematic for the entire field, such distortion is especially evident when studying a form as visceral, improvisational, and gestural as commedia dell'arte. Buckley's approach to the visual iconography of the Recueil Fossard is nuanced, detailed, and elegantly composed. His subtle reading of the gestural vocabulary recorded in the visual logic of the images gives new insight into the physical techniques of early commedia as well as the "vision of the world (and the understanding of the body's relationship to it) that this physical aesthetic articulated and implied." The implications of this study extend far beyond commedia, inasmuch as this form profoundly influenced a great deal of early modern theatre. Buckley's argument thus suggests nothing less than a "radical history of the theatrical body in modern culture."

This issue inaugurates my tenure as Editor and Leo Cabranes-Grant's as Associate Editor of *Theatre Survey*, which we are privileged to inherit from our predecessors, most immediately Martin Puchner and Jody Enders. We are grateful for their careful stewardship and visionary leadership of the journal over the past four years. Many of the innovations that Jody Enders brought to the journal have remained, such as "Critical Stages" and "What Are You Reading?" To these we hope to add in future an occasional column, "What Are You Watching?" which will bring some elements of contemporary performance onto the pages of *Theatre Survey* along with recognition of the way new visual sources are influencing our research. This issue also marks Mike Sell's last as Editor of "Critical Stages." We thank him heartily for his capable service, and we extend an enthusiastic welcome to Patrick Anderson as the incoming editor of this column. Kate Babbitt, our new Assistant Editor, officially joins our masthead with this issue, a position she has surely earned by the remarkable job she has done cultivating and burnishing articles in both this and the previous issue.

Over the past six months *Theatre Survey* has migrated to an online submission process: manuscripts can now be submitted to us through the website *http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/theatresurvey*. We are optimistic that this service will streamline our workflow from submission through peer review and production, ensuring that we give authors even more timely decisions on their manuscripts. The system will also enhance continuity between editors, which we hope will make the *Theatre Survey* editorship an even more attractive position for our successors. (Readers take note: a search for a new Associate Editor will commence shortly!)

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ENDNOTES

1. R. Howard Bloch and Stephen G. Nichols, "Introduction," in *Medievalism and the Modernist Temper*, ed. Bloch and Nichols (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 1.
2. Maciej Szybist, "Akropolis," *Echo Krakowa* 45 (24 February 1978): 2.
3. The year 2009 is ten years since the death of legendary director Jerzy Grotowski and fifty years since the founding of his Polish Laboratory Theatre.

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